



Australian Government

Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation



The **ILSC GROUP**

PEOPLE. COUNTRY. OPPORTUNITY.

# NORTHERN AUSTRALIA

Regional Indigenous Land and Sea Strategy 2019 – 2023



# ILSC: by the Numbers

## LAND MANAGEMENT AND ACQUISITION PROJECTS



By the ILSC in the Indigenous Estate since 1996



For the Indigenous Estate including 4 water-based interests\*\*



SINCE 2011



Held by Indigenous groups



Enabled every year through property acquisition\*

## PROPERTIES DIVESTED



Land divested to Indigenous Corporations



Economic opportunities enabled



Supported by 570 project partners (third party)\*\*

\*Average per year since 2011-21  
\*\*Total 1996-2021



## MESSAGE FROM THE ILSC CHAIRPERSON

Welcome to the Regional Indigenous Land and Sea Strategy (RILSS) for the Northern Australia region.

Our RILSS represents a more detailed, regionally focused approach to how we will support the return and management of Country to deliver positive changes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, communities, and corporations. It is an extension of our National Indigenous Land and Sea Strategy (NILSS), which provides the overarching, national direction for what we do and how we do it in partnership with you.

Over the last 25 years we have used our funding to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and communities to reclaim and manage their Country, returning 6.4 million hectares of Country and funding nearly 1,000 management projects.

Since the ILSC was established the political and social landscape of Australia has changed. It is important that we change too, to make sure that we keep pace with the evolving aspirations and needs that Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders have for Country.

A new Board in 2022 brought a fresh and diverse set of ideas, skills, expertise, and connections to the ILSC. It gave us an opportunity to strengthen our relationship with you and your community.

From May to August 2022, we undertook our largest ever engagement process to explore the aspirations and needs of people have for Country and to inform the development of a new NILSS. We visited 44 locations across Australia, held 2 online sessions, spoke with over 440 people, and received 258 survey responses.

Our national engagement ended on the 26th of August. We are now undertaking the incredibly important task of exploring what was shared with us and thinking about how we respond to meet your needs.

A new NILSS will be released in 2023 and soon after we will commence regional consultation to develop a new RILSS. For this reason, we have decided to extend the current RILSS until the end of 2023. We want to ensure the RILSS is contemporary, informed by your views and aligned with the NILSS. At the end of 2023, and following the release of a the new NILSS, we will release fully a revised RILSS.

I encourage you to join us in 2023 to have your say on the RILSS, shape our work and let us know what is important to you, your region and your Country.

**Ian Hamm, ILSC Chairperson**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'I. Hamm', written in a cursive style.



## INTRODUCTION

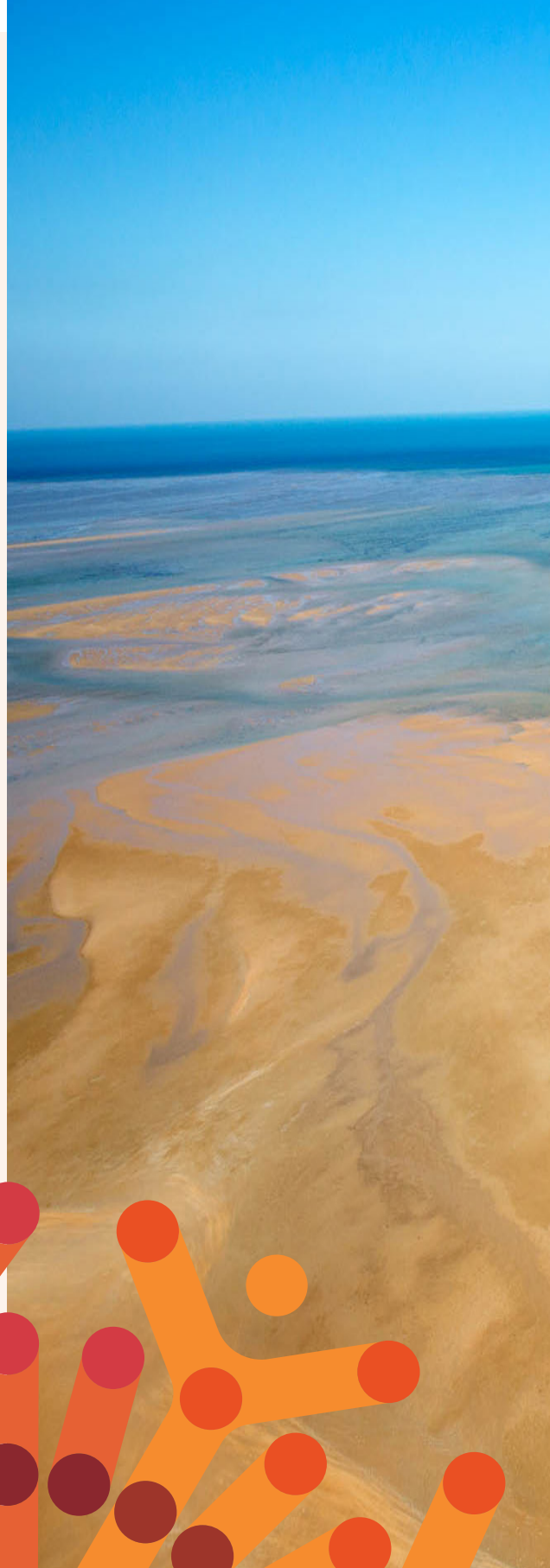
The Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation (ILSC) is an independent statutory authority established under the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Act 2005* (the ATSI Act) to assist Indigenous people to acquire and manage interests in land and waters to achieve economic, environmental, social or cultural benefits.

The ILSC has two purposes, as set out in the ATSI Act:

- > to assist Indigenous Australians to acquire land and water-related rights
- > to assist in the management of Indigenous-held land and waters, however it was acquired.

This gives the ILSC an important role in working with Indigenous people to define, enhance, and grow the Indigenous Estate.

The Indigenous Estate is a central concept in the strategy of the ILSC that encompasses both tangible and intangible assets and attributes relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It includes interests in land, waters and economic development, and also complex human capital elements, including people, society, knowledge and intellectual property flowing from Indigenous Australians' unique culture.







## OUR ROLE

We buy and divest land and water-related rights to Indigenous people

We support Indigenous people to preserve and protect culture through connection to country

We build the capacity and capability of Indigenous people to sustainably manage and protect country

We partner with Indigenous people to drive and influence opportunities for their country

## OUR OPERATIONS

**We invest in projects:** providing funding associated with buying, divesting, managing and/or developing land/water interests and/or foundation projects (such as infrastructure, plant and equipment, feasibility assessment planning activities)

**We provide advice and capability support:** Supporting Indigenous land holders with access to information, training, knowledge and systems to support sustainable management of country and delivery of benefits

**We connect Indigenous landowners:** build and broker relationships with markets, opportunities, partnerships through facilitation, advocacy and negotiation

## OUR IMPACT

Indigenous people enjoy opportunities and benefits that the return of country, and its management brings



## ➤ LEGISLATIVE REFORM

After receiving independent expert advice on options to improve the sustainability and growth of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Land Account (Land Account), significant consultations were undertaken across Australia on two key reforms to the ILSC's legislation, the ATSI Act:

- To help secure the sustainability of the Land Account by handing its management to the Future Fund and broadening its investment mandate; and
- Extending the remit of the ILSC to include water.

Responses to the proposed reforms were overwhelmingly supportive, and a package of three Bills relating to the functions and funding of the ILSC were enacted in November 2018, and came into effect 1 February 2019.

These changes are the driver for the development of this document.

## ➤ ABOUT THE NATIONAL INDIGENOUS LAND AND SEA STRATEGY AND REGIONAL INDIGENOUS LAND AND SEA STRATEGIES

The National Indigenous Land and Sea Strategy (NILSS) is a requirement under the ATSI Act and is the ILSC's key policy document. The NILSS released in 2019 was the ILSC's first national strategy to include fresh and salt water-based activities.

This NILSS presents the ILSC's priority focus areas, program delivery mechanisms and renewed commitment to building enduring stakeholder relationships as a framework for achieving the ILSC's vision of *Indigenous people enjoying opportunities and benefits that the return of country and its management brings.*



## > ABOUT THE RILSS

Also required by the ATSI Act are Regional Indigenous Land and Sea Strategies (RILSS), which provide regions within Australia with an additional, layered framework for the interpretation and implementation of the NILSS.

In this iteration of the NILSS and RILSS, the RILSS will contain more detailed information on what the ILSC's strategic direction means for Indigenous corporations. They describe how the ILSC wants to deliver its mandate to achieve economic, environmental, social and cultural benefits for Indigenous Australians over the coming years.

## > RILSS REGIONS

In developing the previous NILSS, the ILSC changed its approach to 'regions'. Previously the regions were the six states (with NSW incorporating the ACT) and the Northern Territory. The new regions, continued in these NILSS and RILSS, reflect important environmental, demographic and economic differences across the continent and the ways these are reflected in the different situations of, and opportunities for Indigenous people.

The ILSC recognises the opportunities presented through bringing together discrete, but aligned, land parcels and water interests within the Indigenous Estate to allow the development of joined-up projects, and economies of scale.

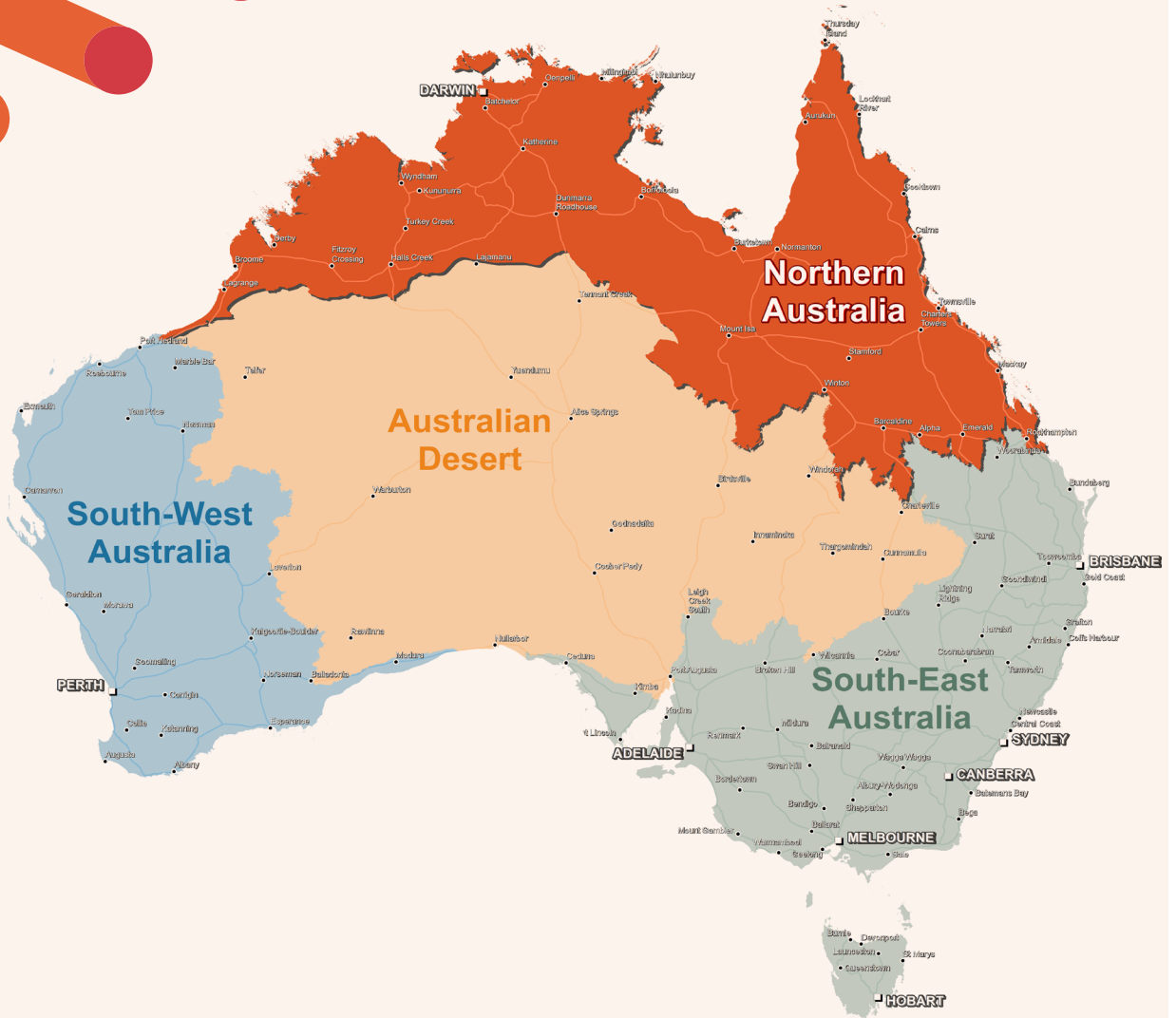
The ILSC also recognises that the new regions do not necessarily align with cultural and/or language groups, an issue which was raised during recent consultation on these strategies. These new boundaries are 'soft borders' and as such are not intended to preclude any group or project from being considered on the basis of their position in relation to a regional 'border'. The regions are a guide to the kind of projects that may be more desirable and successful in any given region – inclusive of land and waters.

The following regions will continue to underpin the RILSS:

- > **Northern Australia**—Includes northern Western Australia, the northern areas of the Northern Territory and North Queensland. The climate, environment and general economic development opportunities in northern Australia differ significantly from the rest of Australia. For example, savanna burning for emissions reduction is viable in this broad region and not in others.
- > **Desert**—Includes the desert regions of Western Australia, northern South Australia, south-west Queensland and north-west New South Wales. As with the Northern Australia region, Australia's desert regions are unique. There is value in considering the opportunities arising in these areas in their own right.
- > **South-West Australia**—Includes southern Australia, west from the South Australian border through to Perth and Geraldton in Western Australia. This region has diverse opportunities in agriculture, resource extraction and urban-based industries.
- > **South-East Australia**—Includes southern Australia, east of Ceduna in South Australia and including all of Victoria and Tasmania, most of New South Wales and south-east Queensland including Brisbane. The mostly temperate regions of south-eastern Australia are more heavily populated and urbanised than the other regions, with more intensive and diverse agricultural operations and greater employment and training opportunities in professional and service industries.

The strategy for each of these regions highlight the alignment between opportunities arising in these regions and the ILSC's focus areas. These strategies are based on recent stakeholder consultation and, like the NILSS, will be revisited in 2023.





# NORTHERN AUSTRALIA REGION

Regional Indigenous Land and Sea Strategy 2019 – 2023

## ➤ INDIGENOUS POPULATION

The Northern RILSS region has an Indigenous population of approximately 122,000 – the second highest of the RILSS regions. Most of the Indigenous population within this region live in regional, remote and very remote areas, with Darwin only home to just over 11,500 of the 40,000 Indigenous people in the northern NT. Far North Queensland has an Indigenous population of around 38,000, with 40,000 Indigenous people in North Queensland. The north western area of Western Australia, which incorporates the Kimberley region with an Indigenous population of approximately 14,000.

The Northern Territory continues to have the highest proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in rural areas at approximately 49 percent. However the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population is becoming increasingly urbanised. Since the 1996 Census, the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in urban areas across Australia has increased from 73 percent to 79 percent. This was largely driven by the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population in capital cities, which has increased from 30 percent in 1996 to 35 percent in 2016.

## ➤ INDIGENOUS-HELD LAND AND WATERS

Northern Australia has proportionately more Indigenous land than southern Australia. This land is held under a diverse range of tenure arrangements: freehold land, Crown land subject to pastoral lease (under different State/Territory legislation), National Reserve land where activity is restricted, and Indigenous land, also subject to various legislative regimes.

- Indigenous land interests in the Kimberley, WA, largely arise from significant native title determinations.

- In the Northern Territory large areas of land have been granted under inalienable freehold title to Aboriginal Land Trusts under the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976*; most of the pastoral districts of the Territory are subject to native title claims. Recent Native Title Determinations have resulted in waters also coming under Native Title.
- In northern Queensland Indigenous people have some interests in land in the Torres Strait and on Cape York but Indigenous holdings elsewhere are limited—the Queensland area of this region has more conventional freehold title than other jurisdictions.

Common law judgements under the Native Title Act have recognised extensive Indigenous interests in sea country. These include the Blue Mud Bay High Court decision (July 2008) in favour of Traditional Owners in the Northern and the *Akiba* finding in favour of Traditional Owners in the *Torres Strait Regional Seas Claim Group v Commonwealth* (August 2013).

In all parts of this region there are extensive native title claims, both determined and registered.

For more information, the Australian Government has mapped land tenure in northern Australia at <https://www.austrade.gov.au/land-tenure>, noting that the Australian Government defines northern Australia differently to the ILSC.

## **LANDSCAPE**

The Northern Australia region covers an area of approximately 1.9 million square kilometres. It stretches across three states and territories, from the Kimberley region, WA, across to the Top End of the Northern Territory, then across the Gulf of Carpentaria to Queensland, from Rockhampton on the Tropic of Capricorn and north to the Torres Strait. It is home to a diverse range of landscapes with most of it less than 500 metres above sea level.

The region's biodiversity assets include the tropical rainforests, wetlands and arid rangelands of the Northern Territory (NT); the steep mountain ranges of the Ord and Fitzroy River catchments of the Kimberley; and in the east, relatively intact savanna woodland

and important rainforest areas as well as the Mitchell, Gilbert, Norman and Staaten River catchments on Cape York, all of which flow into the Gulf of Carpentaria. Most of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage area lies within this region. Other significant vegetation communities are coastal mangrove forests, swamp forests, floodplain grasslands and heathlands. Extensive areas of Cape York (Qld), Arnhem Land (NT), and the Kimberley (WA) are part of Australia's National Reserve System.

Vegetation within this region mainly consists of savanna woodland. The savannas range from open forest in the coastal and sub-coastal regions to woodlands in the semi-arid regions to open woodlands with scattered low trees in the more arid interior.

### **Case study: The Keeping Place, Western Australia**

Easier access to a wealth of cultural heritage information and improved relationships between Traditional Owners and resource companies are not the only benefits from The Keeping Place project. The ILSC's support of this innovative project has helped Indigenous people to protect their culture and manage their land.

Stretching across the South-West and parts of the Desert and Northern regions, The Keeping Place Project in WA has created an online geospatial cultural heritage management system providing improved avenues for Indigenous groups to store and access their cultural information. The project is a co-funded partnership involving the ILSC; native title groups Karika Niyiyaparli Aboriginal Corporation (KNAC) and Yinhawangka Aboriginal Corporation; and resources companies BHP Billiton, Fortescue Metals Group and Rio Tinto. It also has the support of the National Trust of Western Australia.

Indigenous groups now have an innovative technology solution for managing native title and related land management and development issues that also gives them meaningful access to cultural information drawn from more than 40 years of resources companies conducting heritage surveys on Niyiyaparli country. The Keeping Place Project puts the stories of the Niyiyaparli Traditional Owners told during these surveys into the hands of the people to whom they are most meaningful.

KNAC had a developmental and guiding role in the technology solution and Niyiyaparli Traditional Owners developed the cultural protocols to be applied in the system.

The project has helped in improving relationships between Traditional Owners and resource companies and workshops have been held to determine how the technology solution could be adapted and used for the benefit of other Traditional Owner groups.

KNAC now has access to repositories of cultural and heritage information and a management system that supports them to protect significant cultural heritage sites. The innovative geospatial tool can be used to collect, store and appropriately share cultural knowledge, perform desktop assessments of heritage surveys, plan land management projects and maintain compliance with land use agreements.

A new Indigenous-owned company has been formed with KNAC as the founding member and is now making the technology available nationally. The ownership model enables other Indigenous groups to join as owner-members of the company.





Most ecosystems in northern Australia are grassy landscapes. Notable exceptions are the rainforests (the Wet Tropics in north Queensland and the monsoon forests and vine thickets of Queensland, Top End and Kimberley), some of the wetland ecosystems closer to the coast, and the mostly rugged and rocky landscapes of the Kimberley and western Arnhem Land where the vegetation is sparse scrub or heath.

Spanning thousands of kilometres, the 'saltwater country' of northern Australia includes some of the most intact coastal and marine habitats and floodplains in the world. This country is a stronghold for threatened turtles and dugongs and home to some of the world's most extensive mangrove forests, coral reefs and seagrass meadows. It consists of one of the least human-impacted marine ecosystems in the world, combined with, across its more northerly reaches, a mostly intact traditional Indigenous knowledge base for land and sea management.

## CLIMATE

The Northern Australia region lies in a tropical climatic zone, where temperatures are warm throughout the year and there are two distinct seasons: the 'wet' and the 'dry'. The wet season lasts from around November through to April. Almost all of the year's

rain falls during this period and generally arrives in heavy bursts from thunderstorms, widespread monsoon depressions or from the passage of associated tropical cyclones. The dry season, from May through to October exhibits dry, cool weather with little rain, low humidity and wider-ranging temperatures.

Across the savannas the more stable dry season is characterised by prevailing dry south-east winds (moister on the east coast), cooler temperatures, greater temperature variation during the day, clear skies and low humidity. Light rains may fall, particularly in the south-east portions, during the early winter months but can occur in any month. Occasionally cold air from the south penetrates well into the tropics and night-time temperatures may drop enough for frosts to form in some inland regions in the east and west. As the dry progresses through August and September the temperatures begin to rise as the sun moves more directly overhead and the south-easterly winds begin to subside.

The coastal areas of this region tend to have more predictable monsoon climate with a shorter, intense wet season. However, as you move further inland away from the coast the climate becomes generally less predictable and drier. The impacts of climate change are predicted to exacerbate these conditions.





## ➤ WATER RESOURCES

The Northern Australia region is home to a large number of river and salt and freshwater floodplain systems, groundwater resources and fisheries. The availability of water is a major driver of economic activity, particularly for key northern industries such as agriculture, aquaculture, mining, energy and tourism. While this region receives more than 60 per cent of national rainfall, falls are highly seasonal and capturing and using it is challenging. As well as containing a significant number of surface water systems, the region is also home to significant groundwater resources, including a portion of the Great Artesian Basin.

Across the north, the marine environment comprises various declared fisheries and state and Commonwealth marine reserves.

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park is a feature of the Queensland coastline within the Northern region – this park is itself broken up into various zones, where different types of activity are permitted. Across the Northern Territory, NT Water Plan Areas are also subject to Strategic Aboriginal Water Reserves, wherein a percentage of water from the consumptive pool in each area is set aside for exclusive Aboriginal use.

## ➤ ISSUES

Among the land management issues in this region are: fire management (including loss of traditional Indigenous burning practices), invasive animal and plant species, and the impact of grazing, including land clearing.

Presently there is a suite of weeds, ranging from grasses to shrubs to larger woody plants, invading large tracts of private land of marginal productivity, and public lands including national parks. This constrains the financial and labour resources available for weed management. In this region there is therefore a strong emphasis on preventing the spread of established weeds. Invasive animals include cats, cane toads, buffalo and wild pigs; collectively these pests damage both natural environments and grazing land.

Climate change is a significant issue across this region, with these effects already evident or likely to occur:

- > increased average temperatures
- > rising sea-levels, stronger tropical cyclones and increased intensity of oceanic storm surges
- > saltwater intrusion into northern Australia's vast freshwater floodplains
- > bleaching and death of coral reefs, damage to mangrove forests and seagrass
- > more favourable conditions for mosquitoes and mosquito-borne disease such as Dengue Fever and Ross River virus
- > disruption of the finely balanced relationships between flora and fauna in the region's ecosystems
- > more extreme fire and flood events that may assist the spread of invasive species.

In addition to the environmental threats described above, other challenges directly affect Indigenous people's ability to gain benefit from their land holdings in this region. Property-rights infrastructure (cadastral surveys, town planning) and physical infrastructure (access roads, telecommunications, essential services) are necessary to achieving economic development on Indigenous land. Investment at all levels of government is needed to address these widespread infrastructure deficits, in particular across remote and very remote Indigenous Australia.

## Case study: Case study: Kakadu Plum/ Gubinge, NT and WA

Kakadu Plum, or Gubinge in Western Australia, is a native fruit that grows almost exclusively on Indigenous-held land across northern Australia, from the Kimberley to Arnhem Land. An ILSC funding commitment of \$448,000 in 2018–19 to establish Indigenous-lead Kakadu Plum supply chain has hit its targets. The Northern Australia Aboriginal Kakadu Plum Alliance (NAAKPA), a consortium of nine Aboriginal corporations, is moving towards sustainability.

The project supports Indigenous community harvesting and processing enterprises, and facilitates access to Kakadu Plum and its extracts by large-scale markets. The aim is to provide greater Indigenous influence and control in the market and maximise the flow of benefits back to Indigenous communities. To date, work by the ILSC in partnership with NAAKPA has increased demand for Kakadu Plum in the Australian marketplace and increased supply of Kakadu Plum coming from Aboriginal enterprises.

This year, NAAKPA members collectively harvested over 20 tonnes of Kakadu Plum with a farm gate value of more than \$650,000. Over 400 people, mainly women, were involved in the harvest which generated significant economic, cultural and social benefits on-country.

The project has increased the operational capacity and capabilities of each of the Aboriginal enterprises by providing food safety audits; chemical and microbial testing of fruit; the development of marketing material; and the creation of marketing opportunities, including representation at the Asia Pacific Food Safety Conference.

Contract templates for Access and Benefit Sharing Agreements to protect traditional knowledge have been created and buyers are now able to go to one contact point, on the NAAKPA website.

On the ground, funding has been used to buy equipment including stainless steel benches, freezers, packing machines and all-terrain vehicles, and to support travel to facilitate training, networking and knowledge sharing among the Aboriginal member enterprises.

The alliance has grown to become Australia's largest Indigenous-controlled native-food supply network with Kakadu Plum and many other plant food species being distributed to national markets. Based on the success of the project to date, the ILSC is now working with NAAKPA to develop a strategy for the long-term growth and sustainability of the Kakadu Plum and wider bushfoods sector in northern Australia.





## ➤ OPPORTUNITIES

The Northern Australia region is generally less developed than the South-West and South-East regions, but there are many existing and emerging opportunities.

The Australian Government's *Our North, Our Future - White Paper on Developing Northern Australia* (June 2015) identifies a range of reforms and investments needed to stimulate development to take advantage of the region's proximity to Asia. The White Paper identified barriers to economic development including complex land-tenure arrangements, skills gaps and critical infrastructure and transport deficits arising from a low and dispersed population. The Government, through the Office of Northern Australia, is funding projects to build a more diversified economy and 'unlock the north's full potential', to create an environment where the private sector can thrive across industries such as agriculture, tourism and resources.

An Indigenous Reference Group (IRG), comprising senior Indigenous leaders from across Northern Australia, was established in December 2017 to ensure that development flowing from the White Paper benefits Indigenous people and businesses. The Northern Australia IRG helps to ensure that the Northern Australia agenda benefits Indigenous Australians and helps and supports the Ministerial Forum on Northern Development.

### **Agribusiness**

In this region Indigenous Australians hold large areas of pastoral and potential pastoral/agricultural land, and have a rich historical connection to the cattle industry in particular. The ILSC is looking to assist Indigenous land holders to increase their influence and commercial strength across all sectors of northern agribusiness. This may involve diversification away from the traditional emphasis on the beef industry, or exploiting opportunities in agribusiness supply chains





that add value to basic agricultural products. Land in the Northern Australia region is already used for cropping and horticulture. The White Paper envisages an expansion of these sectors, and more extensive harnessing of water resources for irrigation.

### **Niche Indigenous products**

Across Australia Indigenous people are the custodians of traditional cultural and environmental knowledge, and particularly so in this region where Indigenous knowledge systems are strong. Opportunities exist for Indigenous land holders to develop enterprises based on growing or wild-harvesting native plants for food, pharmaceutical or cosmetic uses, or the harvesting of protein from native (e.g. kangaroo, emu, crocodile) or feral animals (e.g. buffalo). The ILSC can assist Indigenous people with initial research on potential products, capability building, advice on the establishment of secure supply chains, governance, communications and marketing.

### **Tourism**

The Northern Region has many spectacular land and seascapes with rich Indigenous cultural connections; this combination holds strong appeal for local and international tourists and therefore offers a potential basis for tourism businesses—either larger scale resorts or smaller, locally-based ecotourism or cultural tourism ventures. Along with agribusiness, tourism is a recognised high-growth area in the Australian economy.

### **Conservation and Healthy Country**

Australia needs to transform its energy sources and sequester carbon to meet internationally agreed emissions-reduction targets (the UN Paris Agreement) to mitigate the potential impacts of climate change. Investing in renewable energy technologies can assist Indigenous communities in this region, particularly those who are off the electricity grid, by reducing costs and improving reliability of supply.



Also, if suitable, Indigenous-held land may be used to generate solar, wind or geothermal energy for sale to energy retailers.

Since 2012 the ILSC has worked with community, government and philanthropic groups to increase Indigenous involvement in 'carbon farming', government-approved land management methodologies that reduce greenhouse-gas emissions or store carbon in vegetation or soils.

Savanna fire management (SFM—early dry season controlled burning to help prevent uncontrolled late-season wildfires) is a carbon farming methodology that applies only in this region and is increasingly practised on Indigenous-held land. These projects are eligible to earn Australian Carbon Credit Units (ACCUs) under the Australian Government's Emissions Reduction Fund. Through a partnership with INPEX, the ILSC delivers a SFM program assisting Indigenous groups to plan and implement fire projects across the Northern Territory, supporting economic development opportunities through the application of traditional ecological knowledge.

Given the extent of emerging impacts from climate change, the ILSC offers a critical opportunity for proactive investment across the Northern coastal regions to assist communities build resilience for adaptation to the forecasted impacts of climate change.

Northern Australia is as much a conservation challenge as a development opportunity. Indigenous people live on country that may otherwise be unoccupied and many are involved in 'caring for country', where groups receive income from government and others for ecosystem services. Ranger-type work presents opportunities for expansion, with the increasing need to preserve biodiversity and rehabilitate environments.

In this region Indigenous rangers are widely employed in biosecurity surveillance and monitoring, helping to prevent threats (pests, weeds, diseases) to human and animal health and to Australia's natural and agricultural environments from penetrating across Australia's 'northern barrier' facing New Guinea and Asia. Around 70 skilled ranger groups play a vital biosecurity role, with many located along coastlines in very remote areas.





## Water-Based Activities

Despite the challenges involved in capturing and storing fresh water (including high levels of evaporation), studies by the CSIRO have identified significant opportunities for increasing the area of land under irrigation. This has prompted the Commonwealth Government to undertake to work with other jurisdictions to undertake further assessments of priority catchments in the region. While most surface and groundwater systems across the region are tightly regulated, specific commercial and customary water rights exist for Indigenous communities in the NT and on Cape York in Queensland which provide opportunities for both cultural and economic purposes.

The *'Scaling Up' Inquiry into Opportunities for Expanding Aquaculture in Northern Australia* (Joint Select Committee on Northern Australia, February 2016) pointed to an escalating world-wide demand for seafood-based protein; however, the Australian industry had developed mainly in the south of the continent. The inquiry reported that some 1.5 million hectares of land in northern Australia had been assessed as suitable for aquaculture.

Both the Commonwealth and state governments are looking to benefit from these trends. The Australian Government's National Aquaculture Strategy (September 2017) aims to double the value of Australia's aquaculture industry over ten years, and recognises that Indigenous rights and interests must be considered in developing projects. In the west, the region is home to the Kimberley Aquaculture Development Zone, set up by the WA Government with the aim of making it faster, cheaper and more efficient to set up aquaculture businesses in the area. Indigenous organisations are at various stages of setting up businesses both inside this zone and elsewhere.

In the Torres Strait, resources from the sea are the primary basis for economic development. Traditional Owners there aspire to hold commercial fishing licences.

The ILSC can offer support for acquisition and development of Indigenous aquaculture businesses, the purchase of fishing licences, or assisting Indigenous groups to care for and reconnect with water country.





## ➤ RELATIONSHIPS & LINKS

The ILSC always seeks to consult and partner with local and regional organisations in taking advantage of opportunities on Indigenous-held land. Collaboration is a core principle underpinning ILSC projects.

Alliances are being pursued at four levels:

1. **Networks** – connecting the ILSC to interests in the wider Indigenous Estate.
2. **Communities of practice** – connecting Indigenous groups with shared interests and experiences within and across industries. This is particularly relevant in the context of the ILSC's new role in water, but is also relevant across the spectrum of activities that the ILSC can support.
3. **Partnerships** – cooperation and collaboration between the ILSC and Indigenous groups on key projects and activities.
4. **Strategic alliances** – formal arrangements involving the ILSC, key Indigenous land and water holding bodies, industry partners and/or government partners.

The ILSC will work with stakeholders to provide insights on what has worked in previous and existing projects, tailored to local aspirations and expertise.

The native title representative bodies and service providers across this region are:

**Carpentaria Land Council, Qld**  
[www.clcac.com.au](http://www.clcac.com.au)

**Cape York Land Council, Qld**  
[www.cylc.org.au](http://www.cylc.org.au)

**Kimberley Land Council, WA**  
[www.klc.org.au](http://www.klc.org.au)

**Northern Land Council, NT**  
[www.nlc.org.au](http://www.nlc.org.au)

**North Queensland Land Council**  
[www.nqlc.com.au](http://www.nqlc.com.au)

**Queensland South Native Title Services**  
[www.qsnts.com.au](http://www.qsnts.com.au)

**Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA), Qld**  
[www.tsra.gov.au](http://www.tsra.gov.au)

The TSRA, governed by a representative board, manages the Australian Government's Indigenous programs throughout the Torres Strait.



Other land-based entities are:

**Anindilyakwa Land Council**, NT (Groote Eylandt)  
[www.anindilyakwa.com.au](http://www.anindilyakwa.com.au)

**Tiwi Land Council**, NT (Tiwi Islands)  
[www.tiwilandcouncil.com](http://www.tiwilandcouncil.com)

This region has a relatively high Indigenous population and is home to many significant Indigenous organisations, delivering services in a range of areas (health, legal aid, economic development, advocacy, etc.) in addition to the land-related organisations above.

Much local government is also in Indigenous hands or Indigenous-specific. Areas encompassing Aboriginal communities across the Top End of the Northern Territory are serviced by a network of regional councils: West Daly, Victoria Daly, Tiwi Islands, West Arnhem, East Arnhem and Roper Gulf. Northern Queensland is home to many self-governing Indigenous communities (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander shire councils), including Aurukun, Doomadgee, Hope Vale, Lockhart River, Mornington Island, Palm Island, Woorabinda and Yarrabah and the islands of the Torres Strait.

Other Indigenous organisations in this region include:

**North Australia Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance (NAISMA)**, an alliance of northern Indigenous organisations based in Darwin, NT  
[www.nailsma.org.au](http://www.nailsma.org.au)

**Aarnja**, a west and central Kimberley Aboriginal membership organisation, WA  
[www.aarnja.org.au](http://www.aarnja.org.au)

**KRED**, Broome, WA  
[www.kred.org.au](http://www.kred.org.au)

**Nyamba Buru Yawuru**, Broome, WA  
[www.yawuru.com](http://www.yawuru.com)

**Wunan Foundation**, east Kimberley, WA  
[www.wunan.org.au](http://www.wunan.org.au)

**Aboriginal Peak Organisations Northern Territory**  
[www.amsant.org.au/apont](http://www.amsant.org.au/apont)

**Jawoyn Association**, Katherine, NT  
[www.jawoyn.org.au](http://www.jawoyn.org.au)

**Larrakia Development Corporation**, Darwin, NT  
[www.larrakia.com](http://www.larrakia.com)

**Thamurrurr Development Corporation**, Wadeye, NT  
[www.thamurrurr.org.au](http://www.thamurrurr.org.au)

**Yothu Yindi Foundation**, north-east Arnhem Land, NT  
[www.yyf.com.au](http://www.yyf.com.au)

**Balkanu Cape York Development Corporation**, Cairns, NT  
[www.balkanu.com.au](http://www.balkanu.com.au)

**Cape York Partnership**, Cairns, Qld  
[www.capeyorkpartnership.org.au](http://www.capeyorkpartnership.org.au)

Other relevant entities:

**Cooperative Research Centre for Developing Northern Australia**, Townsville, Qld  
[www.crcna.com.au](http://www.crcna.com.au)

**Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority**, Townsville, Qld  
[www.gbrmpa.gov.au](http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au)

**Office of Northern Australia**, Darwin, NT  
[www.northernaustralia.gov.au](http://www.northernaustralia.gov.au)

**Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association**  
[www.ntca.org.au](http://www.ntca.org.au)



## APPENDIX: RELEVANT LEGISLATION

### Commonwealth

- Native Title Act 1993
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act 1984
- Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999
- Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976
- Lake Eyre Basin Intergovernmental Agreement Act 2001
- Great Artesian Basin Strategic Management Plan 2018-2033

### Queensland

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Land Holding Act 2013
- Aboriginal Land Act 1991 and Torres Strait Islander Land Act 1991
- Cape York Peninsula Heritage Act 2007
- Coastal Protection and Management Act 1995
- Land Act 1994
- Local Government (Aboriginal Lands) Act 1978
- Native Title (Queensland) Act 1993
- Nature Conservation Act 1992
- Wild Rivers Act 2005
- Water Plan (Great Artesian Basin and Other Regional Aquifers) 2017
- Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Regulations 1983
- Water Act 2000
- Water Regulation 2016
- Wet Tropics World Heritage Protection and Management Act 1993







### **Northern Territory**

- Aboriginal Land Act 1978
- Heritage Act 2011
- Mineral Titles Act 2010
- Northern Territory Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act 1989
- Parks and Reserves (Framework for the Future) Act 2004 and Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 2005
- Pastoral Land Act 1992
- Petroleum Act and Petroleum (Submerged Lands) Act
- Validation (Native Title) Act 1994 and Validation of Titles and Actions Amendment Act 1998
- National Environment Protection Council
- Northern Territory Environment Protection Authority Act
- Environment Protection (Alligator Rivers Region) Act 1978
- Northern Territory Fisheries Act 2017
- NT of Australia Water Act 1992
- Northern Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act
- Waterways Conservation Act 1976
- Water Agencies (Powers) Act 1984

### **Western Australia**

- Aboriginal Affairs Planning Authority Act 1972
- Aboriginal Communities Act 1979
- Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972
- Aboriginal Heritage (Marandoo) Act 1992
- Land Administration Act 1997
- Titles (Validation) and Native Title (Effect of Past Acts) Act 1995
- Western Australia Agreement (Ord River Irrigation) Act 1968 (Commonwealth)
- Western Australian Agreement (Ord River Irrigation) Act 1980 (Commonwealth)
- Water Services Act 2012
- Country Areas Water Supply Act 1947
- Land Drainage Act 1925
- Rights in Water and Irrigation Act 1914
- Waterways Conservation Act 1976
- Land Drainage (Validation) Act 1996
- National Environment Protection Council (WA) Act 1996
- Water Agencies (Powers) Act 1984
- Water corporation Act 1995
- Marine and Harbours Act 1981



**Australian Government**

**Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation**



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